Pindus Journal Of Culture, Literature, and ELT
ISSN: 2792 – 1883 **Vol 2 No. 5**
https://literature.academicjournal.io

Possibilities of Expressing the Certainty Modality in German

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Abstract: This article presents scientific views on subjective modality in German and their analysis. The meaning and examples of modal verbs representing subjective modality are given.
Key words: modality, subjective modality, modal verb, secondary modality

The subjective (epistemic) modality is to be distinguished from the objective modality, which is used to describe the way in which the speaker relates to the statement expressed with subject and infinitive, above all his assessment of the reality of this statement (conjecture, (foreign) assertion etc.)".

According to the grammar of Helbig/Buscha, the objective modality is mainly expressed by modal verbs, which only applies to a limited extent to the subjective modality from a morphosyntactic point of view. On the one hand, this applies to the modal verbs themselves, but on the other hand also to the non-finite full verbs of the connection. The restrictions for the modal verbs are of a temporal and modal nature: in general, the modal verbs with subjective modality are only possible in the present and past tense; the modal verbs like, should and want only occur in the indicative, the modal verb may only be in the subjunctive past tense.

The subjective use of modal verbs:

Modal verb	Meaning	Example sentence
müssen	certainty, conviction	Er muss krank sein.
dürfen	probability	Sie dürften schon schlafen.
mögen	conceding assumption	Sie mögen sich von früher können.
können	uncertainty	Er kann noch auf dem Sportplatz sein.
sollen	foreign claim	Sie soll krank sein.
wollen	Statement made by another person about themselves	He doesn't want to have noticed anything.

Subjective modality expresses the assessment (from the speaker's side) of the knowledge ratio - the possible, real and necessary, indicates the degree of certainty of the utterance reflecting reality.

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 5 for the month of May-2022

This kind of modality is not the obligatory mark of the statement, utterance. It forms the second modal layer in the sentence, which is sometimes also called the secondary modality. Their semantic scope is much broader than the objective modality. The basic meaning of the epistemic modality underlies the appraisal in a broader sense.

V.V. Vinogradov not only draws attention to the definition of the category of modality, but also names, among other things, the forms of its expression. According to Vinogradov, the relationship of the content of the sentence to the reality established by the speaker constitutes the essence of the category of modality. "Every sentence includes the mark of the meaning modality, i.e., contains the reference to the relationship to reality".

At the lexical level, the epistemic modality is potential and emerges as the universal category in which it enables evaluative utterance. The same applies to other linguistic levels such as morphology and syntax. The universal character of the epistemic modality arises above all in the transition from language to speech. On the linguistic level, the epistemic modality only exists as a possibility, but it is realized in speech.

The epistemic form of the speech act consists in the communicator expressing their position on reality and, last but not least, their certainty or uncertainty with regard to the truth value of what has been said. When comparing the degree of certainty of what the speaker said, two levels of certainty could be imagined in some form of scale. But the treatment of that scale differs between linguists. At the center of this scale is general certainty, which does not characterize any certainty feature, to the left of which are the features of so-called problematic certainty such as "possible", "probable" and to the right those of unconditional certainty such as "natural", "real". In the following description of certainty features, the unconditional certainty such as "natural", "really" seems to express the higher degree of certainty.

In contrast, however, J. Lyons argues that "although the application of the epistemic feature may seem to increase the degree of certainty of what is said, it is not from the point of view of everyday language use. Merely inserting it into what is said of the respective epistemic feature makes it less truthful (plausible) There is no stronger epistemic statement than asserting the factual". As the feature of the epistemic modality, the linguists distinguish their subjectivity. In addition to objectivity as to the facts, the speaker's conclusion is essential in the formation of the epistemic utterance. Here J. Lyons distinguishes the subjective-epistemic modality from that of the objective-epistemic, as well as between the objective and subjective means of expression. To the objective epistemic modality, he assigns the features that witness the logical conclusion and in which one is referred neither to the speaker nor to the process of inference, but one only draws attention to the facts from which the

ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 5 for the month of May-2022

asserted proposition arises.

Furthermore, distinctions are made between the explicitly (I suppose that...) and implicitly (it's probably...) expressed subjectivities.

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ISSN 2792-1883 (online), Published in Vol: 2 No: 5 for the month of May-2022

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